

what is simple and true

By: prettyhearse

"Pearl never fit in, but neither did Rose." Pearl and Rose's relationship from when Pearl comes to earth to when Rose decides to have Steven.

Status: complete

Published: 2016-03-21

Words: 11061

Chapters: 5

Rated: Fiction K+ - Language: English - Genre: Romance/Angst -
Characters: [Pearl, Rose Quartz] [Ruby, Sapphire] - Reviews: 5 - Favs: 10 -
Follows: 5

Original source: <https://www.fanfiction.net/s/11852935/1/what-is-simple-and-true>

Exported with the assistance of FicHub.net

what is simple and true

[Introduction](#)

[Chapter 1](#)

[Chapter 2](#)

[Chapter 3](#)

[Chapter 4](#)

[Chapter 5](#)

Chapter 1

note: uploading from my ao3 (i'm prettyhearse on there too). enjoy!

Pearl tells herself she isn't scared when she's pulled away from her work station and dragged to her superior's office. She stares at the ground as she's walked down the long, plain hallways, her trembling legs struggling to keep up with the quick step of her escorts. By the time she's walked through the door and sat down in front of Blue Topaz, she's already got a good idea of what she's about to be told. She doesn't let herself flinch when she hears her cold, distant voice say, "We've made the decision to send you to one of the kindergartens on Earth."

She bows her head and swallows, "I understand."

"Indefinitely."

She doesn't let it show when she feels her heart beginning to race. She knows why they're sending her away, and she knows what they mean by "indefinitely". They don't want to burden themselves with an over emotional, excitable, loud, defective gem like her, a gem who's unfit for her intended purpose. They only send gems they don't need to faraway planets like Earth.

' *I'm not scared*,' she tells herself again, repeating it over and over in her head like a mantra as she's escorted to the ship taking her to Earth. There's other gems there too, probably in a similar position as her. Defective gems that aren't broken enough to crush, but have flaws that can't be repaired. She sits down and takes a deep breath, trying to resist the urge to curl up in a ball and cry.

She's terrified. But she'll never admit that, and she'll definitely never let it show. She needs to be the pearl she was made to be; calm, collected, controlled. She's anything but calm right now, because she's being sent to some backwater planet where everything will be

different, in a position she's never worked in before, and she already knows she won't fit in.

She never fits in.

She awkwardly wrings out her hands and closes her eyes, pretending everything is fine, because one of her superiors is watching her like a hawk and she knows what happens to gems who can't adjust to their new positions. This is her last chance, and she can't blow it. She sits back, waiting, pretending, until she's called away for briefing.

Pearl tells herself she isn't scared when the ship lands on Earth and she's dropped off at her new post. This planet is so weird and different, and she isn't sure she can handle it, but then she sees who her new boss is and for once it seems like things aren't so bad.

"Rose," she whispers, staring up at the tall, pink-haired gem with watery eyes. Rose Quartz, the gem who she assisted for years, the gem who taught her nearly everything she knew, before she was made a technician and Rose was sent to another planet. Pearl thought she'd never see her again, but here she is, standing before her with her loving smile and bright eyes.

Rose says nothing as she wraps her arms around Pearl in a tight embrace, and for the first time in a long time, Pearl feels like everything will be okay.

Back on Homeworld, Rose was the only one who understood her. She didn't seem to fit in with the other gems either. She was the first and only gem to tell her that she wasn't defective. At first Pearl didn't believe her, she thought Rose was just being kind, because Rose was kind to everyone, but when she noticed how Rose didn't scold her for being too loud or too enthusiastic, for fidgeting and not making eye contact when she spoke to others, for all the things the other gems called flaws, she started to believe her. Rose encouraged her, and that's why they sent her away.

*' Flaws should be **fixed** , not encouraged .'*

Rose shows her around the kindergarten, which is still quite new. It's the only finished one on Earth, and the rest are coming together very slowly. She shows her the injectors and how they work, and Pearl can't help but notice how Rose's mood seems to drop and how sad she seems as the injector's tip digs into the soil below it.

The two spend all their free time together, making up for all those lost years. They usually stay on site, but one day Rose takes Pearl by the hand and they sneak off to one of the forests nearby. Pearl protests at first, scared of being caught, but Rose assures her no one will find out.

The Earth's single sun is setting in the sky as Rose takes her through the forest, showing her all the beautiful things about Earth Pearl hadn't seen from her post on the barren wasteland that was their kindergarten. She listens as Rose excitedly shows her the plants and flowers that cover the ground, the same way Rose used to listen to her when she would go on and on about gem history.

Pearl can't get as excited about the grass and the trees as Rose can, but when they come across a stream flowing through the forest, she smiles. Homeworld didn't have that much water, and Pearl had never been to the areas that had lakes or 's water was used for gem production and nothing else, and the other gem controlled planets she had visited were usually the same.

They kneel beside the stream and Pearl dips her hand into the cold running water, captivated by the sound it makes as it runs along the rocks. Rose tells her about the plant and animal life that live in the water on Earth, and how the "humans" here worship and revere the water. Pearl's heard about "humans" before, but she's never seen one. If they were here, they stayed away from the kindergarten.

She asks Rose if she's seen one, and Rose smiles. She takes her by the hand and pulls her deeper into the forest, laughing.

Pearl tries to not look scared when Rose introduces her to a group of those "humans". She smiles nervously when they crowd around her and poke and prod her, tugging at her uniform and her hair and touching her seem to know Rose, and invite them both to sit down as they gather around their fire. One of them sits beside Pearl and shyly drapes a string decorated with feathers and flowers around her neck, before giggling and running off to join the others.

"Do you know these... humans, Rose?" Pearl whispers, scooting closer to her.

"A bit. We don't speak each other's languages, so we haven't spoken, but I've seen them around when I go for walks and sat with them during their little rituals," she looks at them with those loving eyes and grins, "Aren't they wonderful, Pearl? They're so simple, but they're all so different... They love everything about their planet, in fact, they worship it."

"But... why?"

"I don't know. They see the beauty in everything, even if they don't understand it. They even dance! For no reason!" she gestures towards some of the humans as they hold hands and dance around erratically to the beat of a tree trunk being hit, "They can't fuse, but they still dance, and they all dance so differently."

Pearl watches them in amusement. Gems were taught that there was only one way to dance, and dancing was only for fusion, and fusion was only for deadly situations. The humans don't seem to have a set way of dancing; there's no structure or pattern, or even a proper set rhythm, but there's something about it that seems right, and Pearl is starting to see why Rose is so fascinated by this primitive species.

The two stay there with the humans until it's completely dark, and then they walk back to the kindergarten together. Pearl notices how the light drains from Rose's eyes as they leave the forest and the greenery starts to disappear the closer they get to their post.

"This planet doesn't deserve this, Pearl. It's too special," Rose says quietly, before walking ahead, leaving Pearl standing alone and confused.

Earth isn't as bad as Pearl thought it would be.

It takes awhile, but she eventually realises that she's not the only defective gem there, and that most of the gems she works with are just like her. They were all sent to Earth for the same reason, and they bond over that, and for the first time, Pearl feels like she belongs. For once she has friends, friends who accept her for who she is.

She fits in.

Her and Rose become especially close, spending all their time together, telling each other everything. Rose shows her the other wonders of the Earth, she tells her more about the humans and their culture, and Pearl feels herself starting to fall in love, with the planet, but mostly with Rose. It's a feeling she isn't used to, and one she didn't know existed until Rose told her about humans and how they showed affection and how they fell in love and spent the rest of their short lives together.

Pearl thinks about spending the rest of her very long life with Rose and it makes her feel giddy inside. She loves everything about her, her eyes, her smile, the way her face lights up when she talks about the things she loves. She loves how passionate she is and how she loves everything and everyone around her.

But she soon realises now isn't the time for falling in love, because Rose starts to open up to her and tell her things she says she hasn't told anyone else. She tells her about how much she hates her job, how she doesn't want to destroy Earth, how she'd be willing to go to war for this planet.

Pearl isn't scared when Rose talks about things like that. She's always had extreme ideas, and she isn't the first to be against Homeworld's ways. She hasn't got the resources to declare war on their home planet, and she doubts she'd put her life at risk for some distant planet and its primitive species, despite what she says. She talks about it for months, but doesn't seem to actually do anything about it.

"Earth isn't like the other planets, Pearl," she tells her, "I can't bear to see it destroyed like all the others."

Pearl agrees with her, she says she'll support her no matter what she decides to do, because she knows how much this means to Rose and Rose has helped her see the beauty of this planet too.

But soon it's all Rose can talk about, and Pearl can't but feel a bit scared when Rose takes her to a tall green hill they sometimes went to with a serious look on her face, not saying a word until they reached the very top.

She tells Pearl how she's spent the last few weeks trying to make Yellow Diamond change her mind about ruining Earth, but of course, the answer was no. She tells her how they've threatened to replace her if she doesn't stop asking, and that's when Pearl starts to really feel scared.

Because that's when Rose tells her she doesn't plan on giving up on this planet. She tells her that Homeworld said they'll send an army if she tries to revolt, and that she doesn't care. She'll fight them herself, she'll shut down the kindergarten singlehandedly if she has to. She doesn't even care if none of their co workers stay to fight with her

They're both silent for a while. Pearl stares at the sky, thinking about Rose, about Earth, about Homeworld. She loves Rose, she loves this planet, and she doesn't know how she feels about Homeworld. She just knows it doesn't feel like home anymore. She thinks about

staying here with Rose, fighting with Rose, if there really will be a war and their life together after it. It doesn't seem all that bad.

It's better than being sent back to Homeworld or some other planet and going back to being alone.

"Pearl," Rose says, gently placing a hand on her shoulder and turning her so they're facing each other.

"Yes?"

"I'm going to stay and fight for this planet. You don't have to do this with me."

Pearl smiles, "But I *want* to!"

Rose smiles back, but her smile looks strained, "I know you do... Please, please, understand, if we lose, we'll be killed. And if we win... we can never go home."

"Why would I ever want to go home if you're here?" Pearl says, feeling her eyes well up with tears.

Rose looks at her with those loving big brown eyes in a way Pearl has never seen before. "My pearl..." she says softly, reaching her hand out to Pearl.

"You're wonderful..." Pearl whispers as she timidly reaches for her hand and laces their fingers together. For a moment she almost considers telling Rose she loves her. It seems like the perfect timing, but when she opens her mouth to say it her mouth goes dry and her chest tightens up like it used to when she tried to talk to anyone as a young gem.

She closes her eyes and bows her head, tightening her grip on Rose's hand. She can't do it. Not now, at least.

Her and Rose walk hand in hand back to the kindergarten silently, and as they do she promises herself she'll tell her.

Some day.

Chapter 2

Rose starts to talk to other gems at their kindergarten about her plans and ideas, and sends Pearl to do the same. After spending a few weeks shadowing Rose as she gives her rebellion recruitment speeches, she picks up on ways of sounding more convincing and enthusiastic when she starts talking to gems by herself. Rose starts to recruit gems from other kindergartens too, and a lot of them seem to be on her side.

None of them feel any loyalty to Homeworld after being marked as defective and sent away, and Rose isn't the only one who's fallen in love with Earth. And for those who haven't, she's able to make them see its beauty and wonder, like she did with Pearl.

Pearl puts her excellent planning and strategy skills to good use, making herself Rose's assistant once more. Rose insists she should work with her, not for her, but Pearl insists she doesn't mind.

Gem production begins to slow down, nearly stopping completely in some of the smaller kindergartens as more gems join the rebellion. Rose pretends to play nice with Homeworld, and the threats about replacing her stop as they seem to stop monitoring Earth as closely as they were. Gems spend most of their time training now, mastering summoning and using their weapons, something most of them haven't done for decades, even centuries.

Defective gems weren't welcomed on the battlefield, unless numbers were desperately low.

Pearl starts practising her sword fighting again, something Rose taught her when she was her assistant back on Homeworld. As her and Rose train together, Pearl starts to notice how scarily calm she is. She's training to fight in a war against her home planet, a war that could get her killed, but she doesn't feel scared.

'It's Rose,' she tells herself, 'She's such an amazing, inspiring leader. Of course you don't feel scared. There's nothing to be scared of.'

But soon enough Rose tells them Homeworld has caught on to what they're doing and that need to start preparing to fight at any moment. It all starts to sink in then, when she and the rest of their arm change the emblems on their uniforms from diamonds to roses, and she gets that sinking feeling in her gut she hasn't felt since she was first sent to Earth.

She smiles when Rose embraces her, tearfully thanking her, thanking all of them, but it's a strained smile. Even Rose's warm embrace can't rid of the growing feeling of apprehension, because the full weight of what they're about to do has sunk in. But she smiles, pretending, because she needs to be brave, for Rose, for all of them. She needs to be the pearl she was made to be.

Pearl tells herself she isn't scared when Homeworld's first army arrives. It's a big army, but not much bigger than theirs. Rose tells them to not be afraid, that they've got this, to remember what they're fighting for, and when the first battle begins, Pearl focuses on that.

She's fighting for Rose. She needs to protect Rose.

As gems fall to the ground around her, she runs to Rose, blocking everything else out as she anchors herself in front of Rose and wields her sword. Rose yells at her to run, to protect herself, but Pearl blocks out her voice too and she thrusts her sword into a gem's torso as they try to hit Rose with their mace.

Homeworld's soldiers must have been instructed to take out Rose, because a lot of them seem to be coming straight at her. Pearl clenches her teeth, furiously fighting off anyone who tries to even get near Rose.

"Forget about me, Pearl!" Rose yells, holding up her shield to block a mallet before it drops on them both, "You need to protect yourself!"

Pearl ignores her, running to parry another gem's sword before it can reach Rose. But as she lifts her sword up to block, she hears Rose scream her name and then feels something sharp pierce her chest. Her arms go limp, she hears her sword hit the ground and feels her body go numb, and then it all goes black.

When Pearl regenerates, it's dark and quiet. No clashing of swords, no screaming or yelling. She's staring up at Earth's night sky, disorientated. Her body feels strange, and her head hurts, but there's no pain in her chest.

"Rose..." she whispers, her eyes widening. She sits up, looking around frantically. Did they lose? She surrounded by dozens of gemstones, some cracked. She reaches for her own gem, running her fingers over it to check for any fissures.

"Rose!?" she calls, looking at the gems around her to see if hers is there, "Rose?!"

No answer.

She starts to shake a bit, clumsily standing to her feet. Did Rose get hurt? Pearl tears up at the thought and her mind starts to race. She should have been more careful, then she wouldn't have gotten hit and she would have been able to protect Rose. What if her gem is cracked and she can't regenerate? Rose can heal gems, but she won't be able to heal herself. What if they took her gem? What if Pearl's the only one who made it and she gets captured and taken back to Homeworld? Would they kill her?

Just as she feels herself starting to cry, she hears something rustle in the bushes behind her. She swivels around, pulling her spear from her gem, readying herself to fight even though she's not in the right state to do so at all. But she relaxes when she sees it's another gem, another Crystal Gem. That's what Rose said they should call themselves.

"Sapphire?" she squints, slowly lowering her weapon.

"You're back," Sapphire says, walking towards her.

Pearl nods and stabs her spear into the ground, leaning on it. She's known Sapphire for quite a while. They worked together on another planet when she was a lot younger, and because of her "future vision", Rose always had her nearby, especially during planning.

"Where's Rose? Is she okay?" Pearl asks.

"She's fine, she's with the rest of us over there," Sapphire gestures vaguely somewhere behind her, "We left the rest of you here to regenerate. Sorry, someone should have been watching over here... We should get going."

Pearl nods again, letting Sapphire put her arm around her waist to support her and start walking her towards a clearing. She hadn't realised how much her legs had been trembling, and she was only starting to notice how off her body really felt. It felt as though her legs weren't hers, as though they weren't really there. "Sapphire... what happened?"

"Rose said you got hit by an arrow and retreated into your gem. We managed to push back Homeworld's army a bit but..." Sapphire trailed off and looked behind her at the gems littering the ground.

"Can't Rose help them?" Pearl says, stopping.

"She's tried to heal the ones she could but some of them were crushed beyond repair, and we don't know how many will be able to regenerate in time or at all. We're going to... bury the broken ones later."

"Oh..."

The two go silent, continuing their slow walk back to wherever Sapphire is taking them, until they see Rose approaching them.

When she notices them she stops and her eyes widen, before she runs towards them and grabs Pearl, scooping her up in her arms.

"Pearl," she whispers, hugging her hard, "I was so worried... Don't you dare do that again!"

"Do what?" Pearl asks, confused.

"Risk your life for me! I can look after myself, you don't have to protect me."

Pearl frowns, "Why not?"

"Because you need to protect yourself," Rose says, smiling as she sets Pearl back down on the ground, "You don't have to put yourself in danger, Pearl."

"But... but I want to protect you, Rose. I need 're too important."

Rose's smile leaves her face, "You're important too, Pearl."

Pearl can hear the slight annoyance in her voice and it makes her flinch. "But I'm..." Pearl begins, turning around to see if Sapphire is still listening, but she's gone.

"Pearl, I appreciate it, I really do, but we should be working together. You know that. You don't have to work for me any more," Rose holds her hand out to Pearl and smiles, "Come on, I'll take you to our new base and tell you what happened."

Pearl considers arguing, but she doesn't want to annoy Rose. She sighs and intertwines their fingers. They walk hand in hand, Rose excitedly telling her about the battle, how proud she is of everyone, and how she's certain they're going to win.

Pearl fakes a smile, only half listening. 'I'm going to protect you,' she repeats over and over in her head, 'No matter what.'

Chapter 3

The battles continue and they lose more gems than anticipated. Rose tires herself out healing the ones she can, and Pearl tires herself out trying to protect Rose. She gets used to regenerating, getting better at it so she's able to come back as quick as possible. Protecting Rose means she ends up retreating into her gem more than she ever thought she would, but she doesn't care.

Rose does though.

After every battle, they have a battle of their own. Rose begs Pearl to stop sacrificing herself, to stop worrying about her and to look out for herself. Pearl argues back, but in the end she pretends to comply, only because she hates it when Rose is upset with her.

As their numbers drop, more gems who decided to rebel against Homeworld for similar reasons join them. They're still short on numbers, and a lot of the gems aren't fighters, Rose insists they have a purpose anyways, and does her best to encourage and inspire the rest of them.

They slowly begin to shut down the kindergartens, but those aren't the only things they have to destroy. Pearl is part of the group Rose sends to destroy the Galaxy Warp. It's the best chance they have at making sure Homeworld can't send in more troops by surprise.

Pearl pretends she's happy when the warp pads are smashed beyond repair, but she can feel her heart break as crystal shards gather at her feet and she realises that she's really stuck here. Those were their only way of getting off this planet, and now they're gone. It reminds her she's chosen to trap herself here, that she'll probably never see Homeworld or any other planet ever again.

But she reminds herself of why she's doing this, of Rose, and this almost doesn't seem that bad.

Even then, she can't help but look up at the night sky longingly before their next battle, wondering if she's able to see her former home or any of the other planets she'd visited. Rose squeezes her shoulder comfortingly, flashing her an almost sympathetic smile as if she's reading her mind.

Pearl smiles back wanly.

They're about to shut down another kindergarten, one of the last ones left, and Pearl was put in charge of the group being sent in to shut it down and knock out the injectors. Rose and the rest were surrounding the entrance to keep Homeworld's troops out.

Pearl knows why Rose is sending her in with the other group, and it annoys her. She needs Rose so she can stay focused in battle, she needs to protect her. Without Rose, she has nothing to fight for, nothing to distract her from the chaos unfolding around her.

So as her group begins to rush into the kindergarten and rip down injectors, Pearl hangs back. She won't let Rose fight by herself. She wields her sword and begins fighting her way through the battlefield to Rose. She's somewhere in the center, holding her shield up, her sword still in its scabbard. She only ever used it as a last resort.

Pearl's eyes well up with tears and she runs towards Rose as she sees a much larger gem about to bring a giant axe down on her, but she blinks hard because she has to be brave. She can't cry on the battlefield.

She swears the larger gem laughs at her as she jumps in front of Rose and brings her sword up to parry the axe. Pearl winces as her sword starts to bend under the pressure, her arms shaking. She hears Rose unsheath her sword from behind, and sees its point pierce the gem's chest. The gem cracks in half as it hits the ground.

Rose never cracked anyone's gem.

They both stare at the shattered gem in horror.

Pearl shakes her head and drops her bent sword to the ground, pulling her spear out, but before she can say anything, she feels something wrap around her ankle and pull her to the ground, dragging her away from Rose. She looks up, dazed, and sees a gem staring down at her, spinning the spiked end of her flail around, grinning as she brings it down to whack Pearl's gem.

Pearl winces as she feels the cracks forming in her gem, and her body starts to feel light, but she fights the urge to retreat into her gem. She grits her teeth and shoves her spear into the gem's torso, smiling herself when she hears the gem drop to the ground.

But her smile fades as she realises that her body is starting to go completely numb and glitch. She's had her gem cracked before, but she's never been conscious while it happened and usually Rose healed it before she regenerated. Her gem's probably too badly damaged to heal now.

She suddenly feels someone grab her, and braces herself, expecting to be killed, but it's Rose. She picks her up and holds her shield up to protect them as she runs to a more secluded part of the battlefield, grabbing another gem to cover them as she heals Pearl.

Pearl clings to Rose as she lets her healing tears fall onto her gem, healing the cracks almost immediately. "Why aren't you in the kindergarten?" whispers Rose as she hugs her and runs her hand through her hair.

"I-I need to protect you."

"Pearl, we've talked about this!" Rose gently sets her on the ground and grabs her by the shoulders, "Stop worrying about me and get back to the kindergarten!"

"No!"

"Pearl, please!"

"Why won't you let me do this for you Rose?!" Pearl yells, clutching her head in frustration.

Rose stares at her, taken aback. She looks up and swallows, closing her eyes before saying, "Howlite, please... just take her back to the kindergarten." She pulls her shield out again and runs off, not even looking back.

"Rose!" Pearl calls, trying to follow her, but Howlite grabs her by the wrist and starts dragging her along the perimeter of the battlefield, back to the kindergarten.

"What are you doing? Let go of me!" Pearl hisses, trying to shake her off.

"Following orders, unlike someone," Howlite mutters, tightening her grip on her wrist.

"I need to protect Rose!"

"No you don't," she snaps, "She can protect herself. She doesn't need you Pearl!"

Pearl frowns, hesitating to answer. Rose does need her, right?

"You... you don't know that... You don't know anything about me and Rose!"

Well, I do know it's pretty creepy how obsessed you are with her," Howlite shoves her into the entrance of the kindergarten, sighing, "Now please, just do what she asked you to do..."

Pearl watches as she runs off, and considers following her, but she's too tired out. Physically and emotionally. She dejectedly pulls her spear out and half heartedly fights her way into the kindergarten. It's mostly empty now, smashed remains of equipment and injectors littering the ground, along with gems and weapons. There's a few gems who haven't retreated yet lying on the ground, clearly injured,

but there's not much she can do. She creeps into one of the holes in the wall and brings her knees to her chest, resting her head on them.

"Rose does need you," she whispers to herself, "She needs you. More than anyone else here."

She stays curled up in the hole, blocking out the sounds of fighting and machinery crashing to the ground with hushed reassurances. What does Howlite know? She knows nothing about Rose or Pearl, she used to fight for Homeworld. Pearl can't believe she has the audacity to act like she's above her.

When everything finally goes quiet, Pearl crawls out of her hiding spot, ducking behind a broken injector so no one will see that she's been hiding the whole time. Gems are sifting through the rubble, looking for their fallen friends, but as Pearl walks around, she notices the atmosphere isn't the same as it usually is post-battle. Gems are actually smiling, cheering and embracing each other. She frowns in confusion, running to the entrance of the kindergarten to look for Rose.

She's standing in the middle of the battlefield holding a handful of gems, healing them. Pearl quickly ducks her head when Rose looks up. Rose is probably furious with her and it scares her.

"Pearl?" Rose calls, beckoning her, "Come here."

Pearl takes a deep breath, wringing her hands out nervously as she walks towards Rose, tiptoeing around the gems and weapons that cover the ground.

"We... need to talk," Rose says once Pearl is standing in front of her, handing the healed gems to another gem standing nearby.

Pearl nods, keeping her head bowed.

Rose gently places a hand on her back and begins leading her towards the forest surrounding the back perimeter of the battlefield,

"C'mon, let's go for a walk."

Their walk through the dense forest is silent. It's a lot like the forest Rose took Pearl to when she first arrived here. They'd gone on many walks through many different forests, and Rose would always point out the different plants and animals, gushing about how amazing it was how every inch of Earth was unique. She's not saying anything this time.

They stop once they reach a clearing. Pearl stares up at the sky until her neck starts to hurt, Rose sits on the ground and plays with the grass on the ground.

"Why is everyone so... happy?" Pearl asks still gazing at the stars, finally breaking the silence.

"There's a chance this might be all over soon," Rose replies, and Pearl can hear the smile in her voice and it almost makes her feel a bit less tense but the next thing she says makes her heart drop.

"Yellow Diamond had a message for me."

Pearl looks down and bites her lip. Rose doesn't wait for a reply.

"She wants to fight me herself. She said if I can beat her she'll leave this planet alone... And we think she means it."

"That's a good thing, isn't it?"

"I suppose but..." Rose pauses and looks up at her, "Pearl, sit down for a minute."

Pearl gingerly kneels on the ground next to her, but she doesn't look at her until she feels Rose take her hand.

"Pearl... I need you to promise me you won't try to protect me when I fight her. You don't know what she's like in battle. She'll destroy you," Rose takes a deep breath, "I know you care about me, and I know you just want to help, but please, please understand... This is

something I need to do by myself. She'll have an army with her, you need to fight with the rest of them. For me. For Earth."

"But what if you get hurt, Rose? What if she kills you I-I..." Pearl swallows hard, trying to get rid of the lump in her throat, "You're too important!"

Rose sighs and closes her eyes, "So are you... I would never forgive myself if you died trying to save me."

"And I'd never forgive myself if I let you die! It doesn't matter what happens to me-"

"Yes it does."

Pearl ignores her interruption, "I'm... I'm just a worthless defective gem! Yellow Diamond won't pay any attention to me, none of her soldiers will. They'll underestimate me and-"

"Pearl!" Rose says firmly, taking her by the shoulders and putting an end to her small rant, "Pearl, you are not worthless or defective. I never want to hear you say that ever again."

"But it's true! That's why they sent me here in the first place! They just wanted to get rid of me because I can't do anything right. I'm useless! B-But here, I finally have something I can do! I can protect you, Rose! I need to... It's the only thing I can do and I don't care if I die doing it."

When Pearl stops talking, Rose is crying, and it's enough to set her off too. Rose hugs her, and Pearl can feel each sob as if it's her own.

"You're not useless, Pearl," Rose whispers, "I hate them for making you think that. That's why I'm fighting them. No one deserves to feel useless or defective, especially the gems here. They don't understand us, Pearl. They don't understand you. They don't realise how special you are..."

Pearl cries harder, clinging to Rose's uniform and burying her face into her chest.

"You're able to do so many things," Rose continues, petting Pearl's hair, "I love how you talk about your swords and gem history and how you flap your hands when you get excited. I hate that you think you're only good for fighting for me when you're worth so much more... I know you don't think it, but it's true. This is what we're fighting for, Pearl. This planet is so special and unique, and it embraces it instead of trying to fix it.

"I want you to fight with me for this planet, but I won't let you die doing it. Pearl, when Yellow Diamond comes... let me handle her. Don't fight for me, fight for this. Fight for the place that doesn't make you feel like you're nothing."

Pearl sniffles, and looks up at Rose, wiping her eyes. 'But I already have that,' she thinks to herself, 'Rose doesn't make me feel like I'm nothing. She makes me feel like I'm everything.' She wants to say it, but Howlite's voice echoes in her mind, 'creepy, obsessive'.

"I love you, Rose," she finally says, smiling at her with teary eyes.

Rose hesitates, but smiles back, cupping Pearl's cheek with her hand, "I love you too, my pearl."

Chapter 4

It's brutal.

Homeworld doesn't hold back. They easily outnumber the Crystal Gems, not that it matters much. They're much more skilled, bigger, and their strategy is better.

But they don't have Rose Quartz as their leader.

Rose stays with them on the battlefield until Yellow Diamond reveal herself, shouting encouragements and healing as she goes. Pearl catches her eye and she gives her a knowing, loving smile, before she's swallowed up by the crowd and Pearl has to go back to focusing on fighting.

The battle wages on for what seems like hours, Pearl getting more and more worried as she sees less and less Crystal Gems around her and more Homeworld gems. She's tired and all she wants to do is curl up in a ball until it's all over. She's needs to be brave, for Rose.

But as she begins to pull her spear out of her gem for what must be the fiftieth time, she's knocked onto the ground with dozens of other gems by a powerful blast. Once the shock has worn off she scrambles to her feet, looking around frantically to see what it was.

A wide grin spreads across her face as she sees Rose, standing alone, sword and shield in hand with no Yellow Diamond in sight. Pearl drops her spear and runs towards her, practically leaping into her arms.

Rose hugs her tight, spinning her around. "We did it!" she cries, "She going back to Homeworld and she's never coming back. None of them are!"

But before Pearl can reply she hears a voice behind them. Rose looks up and her face darkens.

"Is something wrong, Garnet?" she asks, frowning. Garnet was Sapphire and Ruby fused together, and she had inherited Sapphire's future vision. She had gotten particularly close to Rose and Pearl over the course of the war, since Ruby and Sapphire decided they'd like to stay fused and Rose was the only one to encourage it.

"Something doesn't seem... right..." Garnet mumbles, looking up towards Yellow Diamond's ship as it begins to take off. Rose looks too, and then they both stare at each other in horror.

Before Pearl can ask what's wrong both Garnet and Rose grab her and pull her to the ground, Rose quickly covering all three of them with her shield. Another huge blast hits them, bigger than before and powerful enough to send the gems and weapons that were on the battlefield flying. It's enough to make Pearl feel like she's about to retreat into her gem.

After everything goes quiet and Yellow Diamond's ship has left, Rose slowly sits up, putting her shield down. Garnet has unfused, and Pearl stays curled up on the ground in shock, ears ringing. None of them say anything for a few minutes.

The ground is completely void of life, the blast turning it into a barren wasteland much like that of the kindergartens'. Most of gems that once littered the ground are gone, save for those that glimmer on the ground in the setting sun.

"What... was that..." Ruby asks, dumbfounded.

"I have no idea," Rose says, standing up looking dazed. She bends down to pick up a gem, her eyes becoming watery as she prepares to heal it, but no tears fall. Instead she stares at, shaking her head.

"What's wrong?" Pearl stands up and runs to her, clasping Rose's shaking hands.

"She's not cracked s-she's... Look..." Rose shows her the green gem- Aventurine, if Pearl remembers right. There's no crack, but the stone is misshapen and clearly deformed.

Rose traps the gem between her palms and forms a pink bubble around it, before it disappears in her hands. She looks around her, picking up a handful of other gems and shaking her head. "They're... corrupted. That blast corrupted them."

"Corrupted?" Pearl repeats, looking at the gems around her feet. She remember learning about corrupted gems when she was very young, but she was always told it was something rare, and that she didn't need to worry about it.

"Can't you heal them?"

Rose shakes her head sadly, "I haven't seen a corrupted gem since... since before you were born, Pearl. All I can do is bubble them for now," she explains, forming that same pink ball around the other gems she picked up, and letting it disappear.

"Where are you sending them?"

"There's a cave... it's near that beach I showed you before the war. I was planning on using it as a base if we ever ended up fighting near there, so I built a warp. But now I suppose... We'll just have to leave these here. Do you know how to bubble things? I can't imagine they'd take it off the syllabus..."

"Uh," Pearl kneels to pick up a gem, "I-I think so?" She holds it between her hands and watches as a peach-coloured bubble forms around it.

Rose lets out a sigh of relief and takes the bubble off Pearl to teleport it herself. "We'll deal with the rest later," she says, looking over towards Ruby and Sapphire and covering her face with her hands.

They're holding each other, which is nothing new, but Sapphire's crying. Pearl can hear it from here and it sends a chill down her spine. She's seen Ruby cry. She's seen Ruby do a lot of emotional things, but Sapphire never cried. When she wasn't Garnet she stayed off in the corner, hair covering her face, her voice always being steady and even.

Rose goes back over to them and Pearl follows, watching awkwardly as Rose wraps her arms around Sapphire and pats her back. "Don't cry, sweetheart," Rose says, stroking her hair, "It's not your fault at all. Even you couldn't have seen this coming."

Rose continues whispering words of comfort to Sapphire as Pearl sits down next to Ruby, pulling her knees to her chest with one hand and feeling the dusty ground with the other, sniffing dejectedly. She feels Ruby rest her own hand on hers and turns her head to look at her. They're both crying. They're all crying, and it's almost comforting, definitely more comforting than the eery silence of the former battlefield

They stay there for a long time, doing their best to comfort each other, until they decide to stand and finish bubbling the rest of the gems. It takes them all night, and they spend most of the next day finishing the job, but it's something to do. It's something to distract them from the sheer horror of their current situation, and it makes Pearl feel like she's doing something productive.

The blast sent the rest of the gems flying, and they're no where to be found. Rose says they can wait, they've done all they can for now.

She takes them to cave she was talking about, right by the sea just like she said. She says this can be their new base, as they work on finding the rest of the corrupted gems.

Time starts to go by very fast. They spend most of their time looking for the other corrupted gems, who have regenerated now, regenerated into monsters that they have to fight and keep contained. It hurts seeing gems that they fought with, their friends,

be turned into such horrific, unrecognisable creatures, but it hurts more having to attack them.

Ruby and Sapphire stayed unfused for a while, and Pearl can't understand why. They used to always go on about how great fusion was, and how they never wanted to be apart, but Rose just gives them that knowing smile of hers and tells Pearl they have their reasons.

Pearl had thought that after the war, her and Rose would become closer. With no Homeworld to worry about, her and Rose would have more time to be together. But it's not like that. Rose spends most of her time by herself, kindly asking the others to give her some time to herself. Pearl understands that she needs time to get over what happened, they all do, but without Rose she's alone. Ruby and Sapphire are too interested in each other to be good company, and any time they do talk to Pearl, she feels like they do it out of pity.

She hates watching them being so affectionate, always holding hands or snuggling up to each other, whispering things to each other and laughing. She didn't care that it was them, or that she was being left out, she just wished that was her and Rose. She couldn't wait for them to fuse again so they'd stop torturing her.

But when they do fuse, Pearl almost misses Sapphire's singing and Ruby's outbursts and their stupid laughing, because Garnet is so quiet, and it makes everything else seem so quiet and lonely. Rose still spends most of her time by herself, checking up on the bubbled gems and warping to other areas to restore plant life or talk to humans.

Pearl spends most of her time alone, walking around aimlessly, practicing her dancing and creating better holograms with her gem, or sitting on the beach, dipping her hands and feet in the ocean. The water still comforts her, especially the ocean, seeing as that's where she was made.

One night Rose joins her, sitting beside her on the sand as she gazes at the sky while the sun sets. Even though some things on Earth were dull and boring to her, she had to admit the sunset was one of the most beautiful things she'd ever seen. There was nothing like it on Homeworld.

"It's perfect, isn't it?" Rose says, gesturing towards the sky.

Pearl hums in response and says nothing more.

"Is everything alright, Pearl?" Rose asks, scooting closer to her.

"It's been lonely around here when you're gone," Pearl mumbles, "And now that Garnet's back... It just feel so quiet and dead around here."

"I know, but there's things that I have to do before I can just settle down. I promise I'll be around more sooner. Does Garnet talk to you?"

"She's hard to talk to. I do like her it's just... She's a lot like Sapphire when it comes to talking. It was a lot less quiet when they were unfused."

Rose laughs softly, "They aren't used to being fused in an everyday setting, I suppose. I don't think they fused until the war. But they are very cute together unfused, aren't they?"

Pearl nods grimly. She looks at the sea as it drifts in and out, wondering what it would be like if her and Rose fused. She'd never fused before, but she knew how to do it. She'd watched Ruby and Sapphire, and plenty of other gems do it before, and her and Rose did have a close, special connection. Would their fusion be like Garnet? Almost perfect? Maybe even better.

"Rose, um, what's it like to fuse?" she asks vaguely, trying to sound casual.

Rose seems taken aback by her question, and pauses before answering. "Ah well... did you not practice fusion before you met me? It was still part of the syllabus back then, if I remember correctly."

Pearl shakes her head, "I saw demonstrations and picked up on the dancing but I was never allowed to fuse because I was..."

Rose nods understandingly. "Well, it's hard to explain. I myself haven't done it for a very long time..." She chuckles and then trails off, "But if you want, we could try it now."

Pearl turns to stare at her, eyes wide. "Really?"

"If you want to, we can try! I'm not sure how it will turn out though," Rose says as she stands up and holds her hand out to Pearl. "Don't be too disappointed if we don't. We're both out of practice!"

Pearl takes it, unable to stop herself from smiling. She almost can't believe it's happening. She doesn't even care if it doesn't work. She manages to calm herself down enough to remember what she learned about fusion on Homeworld, standing a few feet away from Rose, facing her.

Rose starts dancing towards her with an infectious grin on her face. Pearl follows, smirking as she twirls her way towards her and lets Rose take her hand and spin her around. Rose holds her close, dipping her, then pulling her up again. Pearl feels her gem start to glow, but she can't focus on it because Rose is holding her so close and she's so soft and she can feel her breath on her face and swears it feels like heaven. Pearl stares up at her, knotting her hands in her curls before closing her eyes and pulling herself to connect her lips with Rose's.

Kissing wasn't something gems did. It was a human tradition, but gems picked up on it and started doing it themselves. Pearl didn't understand the appeal at first, especially when she saw how into it

some gems got, but the more she watched the more fascinated she got. And now here she was, kissing Rose, and it feels amazing.

She isn't sure what to do, so she just presses her lips against Rose's, feeling her heart melt at how soft they are. Rose stays completely still, and when Pearl opens her eyes and pulls away she sees Rose staring down at her.

"Pearl?" she whispers.

Pearl feels her face heat up and she quickly lets go of Rose, turning away from her and hiding her face. "I'm so sorry," she mumbles, "I don't know why I did that."

"It's... okay," Rose clears her throat, "Pearl... do you love me?"

Pearl is quite for a moment, waiting for herself to calm down before she can answer. She doesn't look at Rose when she says, "Yes."

She hears Rose sigh and feels her breath against her back and swears it feels a dagger.

"Rose... do you love me?" she asks, her voice quiet. She feels like she already knows the answer, and she wishes she didn't.

"I care about you very, very much, and I do love you Pearl, but not like that. I'm so sorry..." Rose hugs her from behind, "We can still be together, just not like that. I know this is hard-"

"It's okay," Pearl says flatly, not wanting her voice to crack or waver. "I'm fine."

"Really? Because I understand if you-"

"I'm fine," Pearl repeats more firmly, shaking Rose's arms off her as she starts walking away.

Rose calls her, but she ignores her and keeps walking down the beach, until she can't see their base when she looks back. Rose

didn't follow her and she's not sure if that makes her happy or sad.

She sits down on the sand and covers her face with her hands, tugging at her hair as she starts to sob. She know it isn't fair to be angry at Rose, but she can't help it. It's not fair that Rose doesn't love her back after everything she did for her, out of love. She stayed on this stupid planet, she fought in a war, all for her and she gets nothing in return. She lays down and screams into her hands, hating herself for letting it hurt this much.

She stays there crying for the whole night.

Chapter 5

Time goes on and things aren't as bad as Pearl thought they would be. Even though she loves Rose and Rose doesn't love her back in the same way, Rose keeps to her word. They become inseparable, with Rose letting Pearl go on almost every mission with her, sharing all her secrets with her and spending all her free time with her.

They manage to fuse, and Pearl can understand why Garnet wants to stay Garnet. It feels amazing, just as perfect as she thought it would be, and Pearl is sad when they have to separate.

They slowly start to add to their base, using magic to create a bigger space for all of them and a room to keep their fallen friends. It's become an almost daily occurrence to have to fight them, but they all still feel that pang when they bubble one.

Pearl watches the humans grow and change, just as fascinated with them as Rose is. They slowly become more advanced, building towns, then cities, then empires, even having a few wars themselves. Rose loves them just as much as she did when she first saw them, if not more, and she starts to spend a lot of her free time with them.

It doesn't really bother Pearl much at first, until Rose starts taking them home with her, picking out certain humans and touching them, letting them touch her, kissing them. She takes her favourites back home and introduces them to Pearl and Garnet, telling them that she loves them and that's when Pearl starts to hurt again.

But humans live short lives, and after the sixth human Pearl stops worrying. They're just phases, just Rose being in love with that fact that they're human. They'll never have what her and Pearl have, they'll never be her sole confidant, they'll never fuse with her and they'll never spend as much time with her as Pearl does. And no matter how many humans Rose loves, Pearl is still the one she picks

to take to new magical places and Pearl is still the one she tells everything. Pearl is still her favourite, and nothing can change that.

She follows Rose everywhere, even when she says she's goes back to the kindergarten they worked on for the first time in almost two thousand years. The thought terrifies her, as if she's expecting another army to be waiting there, or for the injectors to be on and working, but she knows Rose doesn't want to go alone, and Garnet is busy. She steps on the warp pad and holds Rose's hand, flashing her a comforting smile and not letting go even when they arrive.

It's deathly silent at the kindergarten. No plants have grown in it like they had hoped, and it seems like no humans had dared go near it either. The injectors are untouched. They're almost too scared to step off the warp pad.

Rose breathes in deeply and squeezes her hand, giving her a brave smile. She cautiously steps off the warp pad, tugging Pearl encouragingly. Pearl follows, holding Rose's arm with her other hand and staying close as they make their way through the kindergarten.

"We just need to make sure everything is still the way we left it," Rose says in a hushed voice, "It's unlikely anything would have turned back on but you can never be too-"

A loud bang cuts her off and the two jump. Pearl clings to Rose, pulling her spear out.

"Hello?!" Rose calls, "Is anyone here?!"

There's another quieter bang, then footsteps, that get louder and louder.

"Let's go back, Rose," Pearl says nervously, "I have a bad feeling about this."

Rose shushes her and walks forward, listening intently as the footsteps seem to get closer. Then they suddenly stop, and Pearl

sees Rose crouch down.

"Pearl, come here," Rose says, turning her head to look at her, smiling.

Pearl wavers, but runs to her anyways, looking over her shoulder to see what she's smiling about.

It's another gem. Pearl nearly collapses.

"Hello," Rose says, holding her hand out to the smaller gem cowering under a collapsed injector.

"Who are you?" the gem asks, looking at Rose's big hand suspiciously.

"I'm Rose. Rose Quartz. And this is Pearl. We're gems! Like you. What's your name?"

"Amethyst. Are you really gems?"

Rose nods and points to her gem, smiling, "It's lovely to meet you, Amethyst! How about you come back home with us? I swear it's a lot nicer than here."

Amethyst comes out from under the injector and looks up at Pearl wearily. She'd almost forgotten she was pointing her spear right at her, and she lowers it, smiling to try and hide her blush.

Pearl doesn't know what Rose is doing inviting a kindergarten gem back to the temple, but she decides to trust her. Amethyst seems harmless enough, and she feels bad leaving such a young gem alone in such an awful place. Rose picks Amethyst up and carries her back to the warp pad, letting her sit on her shoulders as they warp back to the temple.

Amethyst settles in rather quickly, and it's like she was always a part of their team. Pearl ends up liking her more than she thought she would, and Amethyst grows particularly fond of Pearl. Pearl is the

one who teaches her about gem history, about her heritage and the war. She helps her master summoning her weapons and her other gem abilities, and she lets Amethyst train with her.

For the first time, Pearl knows how it feels to be admired. Amethyst clings to her and always tells her how cool and smart she is. It's a feeling Pearl isn't used to. She's so used to admiring other people and looking up to them.

Amethyst starts to join them on their missions, and it's hard to think about when she wasn't with them.

It's just them for a very long time. Garnet, Amethyst, Pearl and Rose. Humans come and go, but none of them ever stay around.

Until he shows up, with his stupid van and his stupid hair and his stupid guitar. He shows up and sweeps Rose off her feet. Pearl thinks he's just another phase, he's just another human for Rose to play with until he dies or until she gets bored.

But he's not and Pearl hates him for it.

She hates how Rose looks at him and how he looks at her. She hates how Rose never has any time for her any more, because she's going on a date with Greg, because she has to talk to *Greg*, because *everything* is about Greg now. She stands at the entrance of the temple scowling as she watches on of their "dates", feeling sick when she's sees them kiss.

She waits for Rose to get bored. Usually it only takes a few months, a year at the most, but it's been 5 years and she still blushes and giggles when she says his name.

Rose isn't the only one who loves him. Amethyst starts to cling to him, she grows her hair out to look like him, she tells him how cool he is. Pearl feels more alone than she ever has before and wishes that he would just die, or disappear, even though she knows it's not

fair. She should be glad Rose is happy, but she hates that she's not the one making Rose happy.

She should be the one holding Rose's hand, dancing with her, cuddling with her, kissing her, not him.

But just when she thinks things can't get any worse, they do.

Rose pulls them all aside one day, her eyes bright, that loving grin stretched across her face. She tells them she has exciting news, and Pearl just knows it's about Greg. She wonders what they're doing next. Is he going to move into the temple? Is Rose giving him his own room? It seriously wouldn't surprise Pearl if she did.

But that's not it.

Nothing could prepare Pearl for what Rose was going to tell them.

"Me and Greg are having a baby!" she says, hugging herself, but her gleeful expression fades when she sees their faces.

"Gems can't reproduce, Rose," Pearl reminds her.

"Yeah, where's this baby coming from?" Amethyst adds, "How are you gonna make it?"

Rose laughs, "Gems can't reproduce, but we can give up our physical forms to make a gem-human hybrid! It's going to be great! He'll be half of me, but he'll be his own person too! A beautiful baby human." Rose stares down at her stomach and pats it lovingly.

Pearl shakes her head, forcing a laugh, "He? What?! You can't do that, Rose. It's not possible! And if it was, you wouldn't be able to exist with the... the baby."

"That's what I'm here to tell you. I know it's a lot to take in, but when I have my baby, well... He's going to become half of me. He'll have my gem, so I won't be able to exist with him," Rose smiles sadly,

"But this is what I want to do. I love Greg, and this is my way of showing our love. I hope you understand."

"No," Pearl says, grabbing Rose's hands, "No. No, you can't do this Rose! You can't just give up everything for some worthless human!"

"Pearl," she hears Garnet say firmly from behind her as she grabs her by the shoulders.

"Rose, you can't do this! I won't let you! Rose!" Pearl starts to cry as she shakes Garnet off her and wraps her arms around Rose's waist.

Rose stares down at her with tears in her eyes, "Pearl, I know you're upset, but I want you to be happy for me. This is what I want to do. Please respect that."

"No! It's not fair. Y-You can't just leave me like this!" Pearl lets go of her and clenches her fists. She can't take it any more. Now Rose is going to be gone forever, all because of a stupid human. Rose always told her to not sacrifice herself for her, but now here she is, sacrificing herself for him.

She storms out, ignoring Garnet and Rose as they try to call her back. She opens the door to her room and quickly closes it behind her, submerging herself in the water and letting herself float to the surface in the central waterfall. She lies there, completely still, closing her eyes and laying her head back in the water. Usually the sound of the water would calm her down, but it's not working this time. She stays there anyways, thinking about Rose, Greg, herself, thinking about so much her head starts to hurt.

She's not sure how long she's been lying there when she hears her door open. She doesn't move, not even when she's sees Rose emerge from the water beside her and sit down next to her. She doesn't even look at her.

"Remember when you first came to Earth and I took you through the forest and you found that stream?" Rose asks, breaking the silence.

Pearl says nothing.

"You looked so enchanted. You just sat there with your hand in the water, looking so mesmerised..."

"Why are you bringing this up?" Pearl asks, her voice monotone.

"Because your room always reminds me of it. Ever since that day you always loved the water."

Pearl turns her head and looks at her blankly, "Why are you doing this to me, Rose?"

"Don't, Pearl..."

"Don't what?!" Pearl snaps, sitting up, "You can't just tell me you're going to kill yourself for that stupid human and expect me to be jumping for joy!"

"I'm not expecting you to be happy I.. I won't be here for much longer, I just thought maybe you'd be supportive," Rose says, looking desperate, "I know you don't like Greg, but you love me, and I love you, and I would never do something to deliberately hurt you or the others."

Pearl suddenly throws herself at Rose, burying her face in her chest and hugging her as if she was about to disappear right there and then. Rose hugs her back, gently rocking her as she sees her shoulders starting to shake.

"Rose?" Pearl mumbles.

"Yes?"

Pearl sniffs and presses her cheek against Rose's shoulder. "I don't want you to go... I-I'm scared," she says in a small voice.

Rose lets out a weak laugh, "Me too, Pearl. Me too..."